

Message Text

SECRET

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21/41
ACTION SS-25

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O R 041604Z FEB 76 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6867
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T AMMAN 0635

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAS 4 AND 5)

E.O. 11652: GDW
TAGS: PINT, JO
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING -- ELECTIONS

1. I TALKED WITH KING FEBRUARY 4 AFTER HE HAD FINISHED
MEETING WITH LOWER HOUSE PARLIAMENTARIANS RECALLED FOR A DISCUSSION
OF HIS PROPOSAL TO AMEND CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW HIM
TO AGAIN POSTPONE ELECTIONS IN THE EAST BANK. KING
SAID THAT TURNOUT HAD BEEN EXCELLENT WITH ALMOST EVERYONE
COMING WHO COULD PHYSICALLY DO SO, INCLUDING ALL OF
THE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE WEST BANK. HE SAID HE
HAD BEEN MOST ENCOURAGED BY THEIR ACTIONS WHICH WERE BOTH
UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTIVE OF HIS PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS.

2. HE SAID HE WAS PERSONALLY DISTURBED BY THE NEED
TO HAVE TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS, BUT IT WAS THE ONLY
POSSIBILITY HE COULD FORESEE NOW, ALTHOUGH HE HOPED
THE TIME WOULD COME SOON WHEN ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD. HE
TOLD ME THAT HE WILL ASK FOR AN ADDITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT WHICH WILL ALLOW HIM TO RECALL THE PRESENT
PARLIAMENT (AFTER IT IS AGAIN DISSOLVED FOLLOWING CURRENT MEETING)

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FOR THE PURPOSE OF FURTHER AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION. (MY

UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THIS IS CONTRARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSAL WHICH WAS TO GIVE THE KING AND CABINET RESPONSIBILITY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION IN THE FUTURE.) THE KING SAID HIS INSTINCT WAS THAT THIS WAS THE BEST WAY TO ARRANGE FOR FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, IMPLYING RIFAI'S FURTHER CONCENTRATION OF POWER IN HIS OWN AND KING'S HANDS WAS NOT THE KING'S OWN VIEW OF WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

3. I ASKED THE KING ABOUT RUMORED CABINET CHANGES. KING SAID THAT WHEN PARLIAMENT IS DISSOLVED AFTER ALL CURRENTLY PROPOSED STEPS ARE TAKEN, CABINET WILL RESIGN BUT WILL IN THE MAIN BE REAPPOINTED. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF MINISTERS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY STRONG, HE SAID, BUT DECLINED TO GO INTO DETAILS. HE TOLD ME THAT THE NEW CABINET WOULD BE RECONVENED NEXT WEEK AND THAT PARLIAMENT WOULD MEET TOMORROW TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS ON ELECTIONS AND FUTURE AMENDMENTS.

4. KING NOTED THAT ELECTION PROPOSAL HAD BEEN DISCUSSED EXTENSIVELY WITH SYRIA WHO WOULD SUPPORT JORDANIAN MOVE AND THE SAUDIS WERE ALSO AWARE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING. RIFAI HAD DISCUSSED IT WITH PLO IN DAMASCUS AND KING SAID PLO HAD BEEN TOLD IF THEY HAD ANY OTHER IDEAS ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE THEY SHOULD LET JORDANIANS KNOW. THEY HAD HEARD NOTHING FURTHER FROM THE PLO. FINALLY KING SAID THAT EGYPTIANS MAY WANT TO USE THE ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENT JORDANIAN DISAGREEMENTS WITH EGYPT TO CREATE AN ISSUE. BUT THIS TYPE OF CRITICISM HE SAID WOULD NOT STAND UP WHEN CONTRASTED WITH EGYPTIAN PRIVATE STATEMENT THAT JORDAN SHOULD OR MIGHT RETURN TO NEGOTIATE A WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT WITH ISRAEL.

5. COMMENT: WHILE WE HAVE NO DEFINITIVE WORD ON THE NEW CABINET, THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE MINISTERIAL POSTS WHICH HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED IN HIGH GOVERNMENT CIRCLES AS BEING SUBJECT TO CHANGE -- PRESENT MINISTER OF SUPPLY WHO IS APPARENTLY CONSIDERED WEAK; PRESENT MINISTER OF HEALTH WHO HAS REPORTEDLY ALREADY RESIGNED IN A DISPUTE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OVER CERTAIN CIVIL SERVICE FIRINGS; AND INCUMBENT MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHO KNOW LITTLE ABOUT HIS JOB AND WHO IS RUMORED TO BE SUCCEEDED BY THE PRESENT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WHO IS A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT AND NOTABLY
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MORE COMPETENT IN THE FIELD.
PICKERING

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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